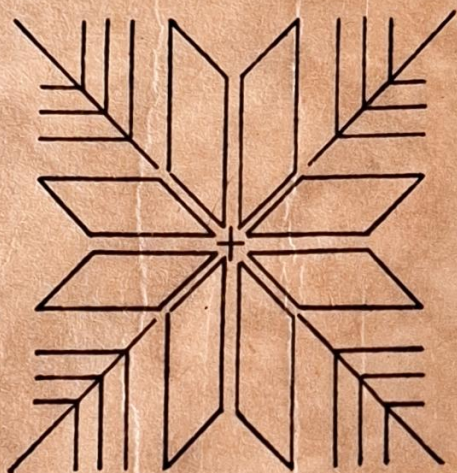


# GRAMMAR AND USAGE OF THE SHETLAND DIALECT

T. A. ROBERTSON AND JOHN J. GRAHAM









To The Yorkshire Dialect Society.  
With Best Wishes.

John J. Graham.

M. A. Robertson





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THE SHETLAND DIALECT







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BY

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AND

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## FOREWORD

IT is a pleasure and a privilege to welcome this book, the first of its kind to be published in recent years, and one that should be an example for others to follow in the various speech areas of Scotland. That it is the first is not surprising. The Shetlanders are a proud folk, intensely conscious of their distinctive traditions, of which not the least is their speech. One of the first things that strikes the visitor to Shetland is the much greater facility and currency of the dialect on the lips of the people. There is little trace of the psychological inhibitions bred of inferiority complexes and snobbery, which have done so much to wreck the old dialects of England and Scotland. Not that there is no danger to the Shetland tongue. Far from it. School, pulpit, wireless, cinema and officialdom are all arrayed against it, and one is amused at the anxiety of so many people to safeguard the status of English as if it were in some way threatened. English has the big battalions behind it and will take good care of itself.

It is the folk traditions and speech that far more urgently need succour and it is most encouraging to see that in Shetland two well-known members of the teaching profession, with whom the solution ultimately lies,



have seen the danger and have been active in combating it. With this present work they have taken a very considerable step towards that end.

This is essentially a collection of the idioms of Shetland speech, culled from the best sources in Shetland literature, especially the works of that remarkable scholar and writer, Haldane Burgess, from the conversation of good speakers and from the authors' own wide and exact knowledge of their native tongue which they are not ashamed to use in their speech and in their fine contributions to Shetland prose and poetry.

From the viewpoint of the professional philologist this book is a welcome and valuable contribution to the all too scanty works on the dialects of Scotland but it is also very properly designed for a wider and more interesting public, the folk of Shetland, who alone can fully appreciate from the experience of their own traditional life the infinite subtleties and nuances of the speech documented in the following pages.

The reader—though every Shetlander is a born philologist—may rather boggle at the grammatical jargon necessary in a work of this kind. That is a small matter. Let him concentrate on and absorb into his own speech the examples so plentifully supplied. Only by a careful and sympathetic study of this work and by its use by teachers and others who should have an interest in cherishing folk culture should it be possible to restore and preserve the colour and strength of a way of life in the northern isles which has made many a worthy contribution to human history.

If the goodwill of one outsider who has grateful memories of Shetland hospitality and a deep respect for the Shetland folk could count for anything, this book would have a great and permanent success in the aim it sets itself. As it is, the final answer lies with the Shetlanders themselves.

DAVID MURISON,

King's College,  
Aberdeen.



## INTRODUCTION

**I**N common with all forms of speech spoken within definite geographical limits, the Shetland dialect has a consistent pattern of usage—a grammatical form, which though uncoded, is nonetheless operative in everyday speech and in the writings of local authors. In this book we have not drawn up a set of grammatical rules to be observed by dialect speakers, but have tried to analyse and codify the predominant patterns of our folk speech.

It would require a much bigger book than this to cover all the ramifications of Shetland usage, such as the many variants in pronunciation, word, and idiom, found in the different districts. We hope that these will all one day be recorded. In the meantime we have collected and systematised a body of usage which, so far as we can ascertain from conversation and by reference to representative authors, is common to most parts of Shetland.

The Shetland dialect is the product of the merging of three distinct languages—Norn, Middle Scots, and English.

Norn, the language of Shetland for more than 700 years, was the parent stream, and has left its mark not only on the vocabulary, but also on the idiomatic structure of the dialect. To show the persistence of Norse idiom it is only necessary to quote the following passages



out of many to be found in a modern Norwegian book "Sjetlands-Larsen".

1) "Han bygde seg et slott der." — which can be translated into the dialect: "He biggit him a castle dere."

2) "... konsulen svingte seg over rekka til dem med det samme." i.e. "... da consul swang himsel owre da gunnel ta dem wi dat sam."

3) "Pa nordsiden av Mainland ligger Ronas Hill." "Ronas Hill lies apo da nort side ida Mainland."

From about the 15th century onwards Scots began to influence the spoken language. The following examples from 15th century Scottish poetry show the historical origin of our current usage in the present indicative of verbs.

1) "for wyffis sayis that lukand werk is lycht"

2) "Na thing of lufe I knaw,  
Bot keipis my scheip under yone wid,"

3) "And burnis hurlis all their bankis doune;"

While the influence of Modern English is obviously making itself felt on the dialect, earlier English influences are also apparent, such as some striking affinities with 17th century literature. In "The Pilgrim's Progress" for example we find that the word "habitation" is used for "house"; and the past tense of "catch" is "catched", as in:

"... here he espied his roll; the which he, with trembling and haste, catched up ..."

The reflexive verb is frequently used, as in:

"thither, therefore, Christian got, where also he sat down to rest him."

We wish to refute the argument that certain forms of Shetland dialect are "broken English". John Bunyan, one of the greatest figures in literature, did not write "broken English".

We realise that the following outline is (but an inadequate picture of Shetland usage, and would welcome any criticism or amplification.

T. A. R.

J. J. G.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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We should also like to thank Miss Bunty Cross who designed the cover and all our friends who have contributed in any way to the compilation of this book, and who complied so tolerantly with many arbitrary requests to "say yun owre agen," particularly Mrs Graham, Mr and Mrs G. W. Robertson, Mrs J. Gray and Mrs J. Johnson, the two last-named forming a link with dialect research of the past through their association with the compilation of Dr. Jakobsen's Dictionary. We are also indebted to the kindness of Mr and Mrs J. Crossan.

Acknowledgment and thanks are tendered to the following for their courtesy in permitting quotation of copyright matter:— to Miss Mary A. Angus for passages from James Stout Angus's "Glossary of the Shetland Dialect" and "Echoes from Klingrahoole"; to Miss Jane C. Mathewson for passages from J. J. Haldane Burgess's "Rasmie's Büddie", "Shetland Sketches and poems", and "Smaa Murr"; to Mrs John Nicolson for passages from John Nicolson's "Hentilagets"; to Mrs Joseph Gray for passages from Joseph Gray's "Lowrie"; and to Dr. T. M. Y. Manson for passages from George Stewart's "Shetland Fireside Tales".

T. A. R.

J. J. G.







## WORKS REFERRED TO

BASIL R. ANDERSON :—

*Nicky Twatt an Keety Claw.*  
*Broken Lights.*

JAMES STOUT ANGUS :—

*A Glossary of the Shetland Dialect.*  
*Echoes from Klingrahoole.*

J. J. HALDANE BURGESS :—

*Rasmie's Büddie.*  
*Shetland Sketches and Poems.*  
*Smaa Murr.*

DR. JAKOB JAKOBSEN :—

*Dictionary of the Norn Language in Shetland.*

JOHN NICOLSON :—

*Hentilagets.*

L. J. NICOLSON :—

*Songs of Thule.*

T. P. OLLASON :—

*Mareel.*

GEORGE STEWART :—

*Shetland Fireside Tales.*

UNST LETTER, 1836 :—

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## ABBREVIATIONS USED :

(c) Colloquial speech.







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## THE ARTICLE

I. DEFINITE ARTICLE. The Definite Article is *da*. The vowel sound remains unchanged before a word beginning with a vowel, whether the word is singular or plural:— *da aets*, *da coarn*, *da hey*, *da taaties*.

“Noo if her limmer o’ a lass,  
Ne’er heedin’ hoo da time wid pass,  
Sat purlin wi’ her lazy taes  
Among da ase, afore da aze,  
Shü’d stamp . . .”

BROKEN LIGHTS.

SPECIAL USE OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE. It is used:—

(a) Before the names of the Seasons — *da Voar*, *da Simmer*, *da Hairst*, *da Winter*.

“An dan cam da Simmer, wi floo’rets and breezes”

“At lent cam da Winter wi strent an wi fury”

RASMIE’S BUDDIE

(b) Before certain words where it is usually omitted in English:— *da kirk*, *da scöle*, *da denner*, *da supper*,

“Auld Maunsie’s Crü below da sun

Said, ‘Hame an’ see da denner on’.”

(c) Before the names of illnesses — *da caald*, *da gulsa*, *da brunt-rift*, *da sturdy*.

“... da warst it ony o’ wis is hed is been da mort-caald.”

LOWRIE.

(d) In a number of adverbial phrases—*da day*, *da nicht*, *da moarn*.

“Here da nicht I’m sitten laenly.”

RASMIE’S BUDDIE.

2. INDEFINITE ARTICLE. The Indefinite Article is *a* before both consonants and vowels.

“Better a empty hus as a bad tenant.”

ANGUS’S GLOSSARY.



## THE NOUN

### 3. PROPER NOUNS.

CHRISTIAN NAMES : Aandrew, Baabie, Inga, Jaarm, Osla, Seemon, Sibbie, Tirval, Willa.

DAYS OF THE WEEK : Monanday, Tiesday, Försday, da Helli days.

MONTHS : Janniwar, Mey, Jooly.

4. COMMON NOUNS. Common Nouns are either Masculine, Feminine or Neuter. Nouns which are Neuter in English are often Masculine or Feminine. The following are among those usually considered to be Masculine : *aer, steid, schair, spade, sun*.

"Da aer shaas broken ida watter, but he's hael for aa dat."

"If ye want a göd steid ye mann tak time ta hokk him."

SMAA MURR.

A smaller number are usually Feminine, including : *lamp, fish, kirk, mön, wirl*.

"Wi da world as shö is, even Paece man be gairdet."

"Da Millennium is comin, bit shö's no swaetin hersel."

SMAA MURR.

Apart from its use in naming formless objects, e.g., *girse, hey, möld*, the Neuter Gender is also used as a term of disparagement—"Hit's a pör object"; "What's da öse a hit tryin?"

5. ABSTRACT NOUNS : Examples are : — *amp, blydeness, dadderi, döl, filska, hatter, hain, hooro, lear, pjaa, redd, röd, sweerta, trift, whaarsaymeko*.

6. COLLECTIVE NOUNS : Examples are : — *bing* (of stones), *koose* (covered heap), *gadderi* (of people), *mird* (of people or things), *steepel* (of fish for drying), *steid* (dense shoal), *brook* (of seaweed).

7. COMPOUND NOUNS : Examples are : — *aeshin-head, ale-drinkin, blöd-freend, caddie-lamb, drummie-bee, gruel-tree, kirk-mark, mid-room, mooth-liftin, on-kerry, shappin-can, stack-steid, trow-pit, waa-geng, watter-traa*.



8. DIMINUTIVES. The two common diminutive endings are -kin or -ik. These endings are applied only to a limited number of words, including : — *köttikin*, *mutshkin*, *prettikin*, *oomikin*, *oorik*, *oomik*, *sillik*, *piltik*.

9. IRREGULAR PLURALS :

bridder	breider
coo	kye
ee	een
fit	feet
gös	geese
moose	mice
ox	owsen
shö	shön

## THE PRONOUN

10. PERSONAL PRONOUNS. The First Person Singular Nominative is "I", which is pronounced "A" when used with 'm and 'll, e.g.,

"Dan I hears on da brig-staens da muvvin o' cüts"

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"A'm seen mair as A'm etten."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"A'll come alang da moarn's nicht." (c)

FIRST PERSON :

I	we
mine, mines	wirs
me	wis, is

"Yun book o mine is no here". (c)

"Dis is mines." (c)

"Yun boat o wirs is no muckle wirt." (c)

"He cam ta wis as a peerie boy." (c)

"Hit's no muckle at da laeks o is 'll git." (c)

SECOND PERSON. The Second Personal Pronoun has a familiar form which is used a) when addressing a friend, b) when speaking to someone younger, c) when speaking to animals. It is not commonly used by children speaking to their parents or to older people.



There is also a Respectful Form which is the same as the Plural.

du	ye, you
dine, dines	yours
dee	you

"Whaar's du been?" (c)

"An sae aald boat for dee an me  
Nae mair, ñae mair da heavin sea."

DA LAST NOOST.

"Ye canna bring but what's no ben."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"... an' sae, if ye laek, I'll tell you a hill-folk's story..."  
SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

THIRD PERSON :

he, shö, hit	dey
his, hers, hits	ders
him, her, hit	dem

When there is more than one subject-word, *me, her, him*, etc., are used nominatively:—

"Dee an me 'll draa up da boat." (c)

"... me or mine may in some wy or idder be da means  
o' bringin' dis about."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

II. DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS. The pronouns *dis*, *dat*, and *yun* have no special plural forms.

"An dan shü spak, 'Dis I mann tell'."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Dis is no very dry paets." (c)

"A misty May an a sunny Jün, dat brings on da coarn  
sjün."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

Generally speaking, *yun* is used of things near in time and place, while *dat* is used of things past or more remote.

"Yun's my bit o laand oot benort, an dat wis my brid-  
der's croft at du saa apo da tidder side o da voe." (c)



*Dem* is also used demonstratively.

"Dem at comes unbidden sits unsaired."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

*Dat* occurs in certain idioms — *Dat's a man. Dat in traath. Sae be dat. Is du comin?. Dat am I.*

12. RELATIVE PRONOUNS. The Relative Pronoun for any Noun is *at*.

"Dey'r aa gluttons at little güd gets."

"Better da piri kol at warms you as da mukkel ean at burns you."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"An' sae da corbie, an' da crow,

'At flapt der wings ower Maunsie's wa',"

BROKEN LIGHTS.

13. REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS. The Reflexive Pronouns are:— *mysel/mesel, dysel/desel, yoursel* (respectful), *yoursels*, etc.

"He wis spaekin til himsel." (c)

"Lass," says I, "doo's shuurly mirakilled desell."

LOWRIE.

*Me, dee, him*, etc., are also used reflexively.

"Set dee doon." (c)

"He wis restin him." (c)

"I linnd me apo da stack." (c)

"Wait du dee." (c)

"Haste dee." (c)

14. INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS. The interrogative pronouns are:— *wha, whase, what*.

"Wha aas dee?" (c)

"What's du gjaan' ta gie'r ta aet?"

TRADITIONAL SONG.

"I kno no wha's da faat is"

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

*What* replaces English *which*.

"What o da twa o dem is best aff?" (c)

15. INDEFINITE PRONOUNS. The indefinite pronouns include :— *aa*, *baith*, *nane*, *ony*, *severals*, *tane*, *tidder*, *twa* (a few), *twartree*.

“Aa da truth sudna be taald.”

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

“Da tane wis sittin sheeksin ida face o' da tidder.”  
“Severals o' dem wis dere.” (c)

The compound forms *demlane*, *derlane*, *herlane*, *himlane*, *mylane*, are used adverbially, meaning 'alone'.

“I wis sittin mi laen bi da sheek o da fire.”

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

## THE ADJECTIVE

16. DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVES. Some typical examples are :—

*peerie*, *birsie*, *rukklie*.

*filskit*, *pellit*, *sholmit*.

*willisome*, *teddisome*, *faersome*.

*vyndless*, *döless*, *fitless*.

*overly*, *fainly*, *gödlly*.

*pör-aamous*, *undömiuous*, *whaanious*.

*lipperin*, *moorin*, *bellin*.

17. DEMONSTRATIVE ADJECTIVES. The demonstrative adjectives are :— *dis*, *dat*, *yun*, *sic*, *siccan*, *siccana*, *datna*. *Dis*, *dat* and *yun* have no special plural forms.

“Dis hens is no layin.” (c)

“Dat boat 'll be da end o him yit.” (c)

“... ye ken yun eens wi da curriuous names...”

LOWRIE.

“O! wir dey ever fail'd aald man

'At hed sic ills ta dree?”

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.



*Dat* and *yun* may be interchangeable, but *dat* is usually more emphatic than *yun*.

"Dat sheep is never been flittit da day." (c)

"Stick on yun tae-kettle." (c)

SPECIAL USE OF *dis*. It is used when referring to things generically.

"We'll laekly shön be seein dis television niest." (c)

"Man, Olie, dir a pooer o' things ta fin oot aboot dis kars."

LOWRIE.

18 POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES. The possessive adjectives are :— *my/me*, *wir*, *dy/dee*, *yeer/your*, *der*.

"... what pat me alang wis ta see if doo wid a bocht some o' my setnins."

LOWRIE.

"Dan I gies his sylk hat a grit rise wi mi clug  
An slips noo mi grip ipo pür Seemun's lug..."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Anidder may come, bit fill dy place dey canna."

HENTILAGETS.

"Doo'll maybe no git time ta licht dee pipe."

LOWRIE.

19. INTERROGATIVE ADJECTIVES. The interrogative adjectives are :— *whatna* (Sing.), *whatn* (Pl.), *whaase*, *what*.

"Whatna boat is yun ida soond?" (c)

"Whatn fok is yun?" (c)

"What wye is shö?" (c)

"Whaase bairn is du?" (c)

20. INDEFINITE ADJECTIVES. The indefinite adjectives are :— *aa*, *antrin*, *mony*, *ony*, *some*, *twa*, *twartree*.

"Black is da sten at aa man spits apun."

"De're mony a gud horse snappered."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

“... aa ye fin in antrin neuks,  
An denkie o' Creation.”

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

“Bring in twa paets.” (c)  
“We'll hae ta try fir twartree sillicks.” (c)

21. COMPOUND ADJECTIVES. Examples are:—*ajj-biddin*, *blyde-spaekin*, *ill-vyndit*, *möld-rich*, *near-begyaan*, *up-loppm*.

22. ADJECTIVE PHRASES. There are a number of adjective phrases, such as: *hale an feer*, *livin an life-tinkin*, *ill come tö*.

23. The following adjectives are compared irregularly:—

göd	better	best
ill	war	warst
little	less	laest
muckle	gritter	grittest

A few superlative forms may be noted — *aafilest*, *aftest*, *hidmost*, *inmost*, *nedmost*, *winderfilist*.

“Whin patience aandooes at da bouw da haal is for aftest heavy.”

SMAA MURR.

24. NUMERALS. The forms of the numerals are:

een	eight
twa	nine
tree	ten
fower	eleeven
five	twal
six	twinty
seevin	a hunder

Before a noun “ee” is used for English “one”.

“Better ee fool ida haand as twa fleein.”

PROVERBIAL EXPRESSION.

In numbers the unit is often placed before the tens, e.g., *six-an-twinty*.



The forms 'da tae' and 'da tidder' are used, meaning 'the one' and 'the other.'

"Whin he cam ta da hoose, dey güid up alang da tae side o' da stack an' he güid up alang da tidder . . ."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

## THE VERB

25. REGULAR VERBS. The Past Tense and Past Participle are formed by adding :—

a)- d as in—	kyerri	kyerri'd	kyerri'd
	muv	muv'd	muv'd
	shill	shill'd	shill'd
	töm	töm'd	töm'd
b) -t as in—	koff	koft	koft
	fill	filt	filt
	loss	lost	lost
c) -it as in—	creep	creepit	creepit
	hock	hockit	hockit
	kyemp	kyempit	kyempit
	lift	liftit	liftit

26. PRESENT INDICATIVE of 'kyerri.'

I kyerri	we kyerri
du kyerries	you kyerri
he kyerries	dey kyerri

27. AUXILIARY VERBS. The auxiliary verbs are : *ta be, ta hae, böst, dö, man, may, sall, will*. (See also Para. 27c.)

"Dem at winna whan dey may sanna whan dey wid."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"Sall dö, sall hae."

PROVERBIAL SAYING.

"He böst til a come alang da banks." (c)

"Dös du ken wha yun is?" (c)

NOTE : "I sall" is often contracted to "I's."

"I's warren he'll no dö it." (c)



Verb *ta be* :

## Present Tense

I am	we ir
du is	you ir
he is	dey ir

## Past Tense

I wis	we wir
du wis	you wir
he wis	dey wir

*ta hae* :

I hae/hiv	we hae/hiv	I hed	we hed
du hes	you hae	du hed	you hed
he hes	dey hae	he hed	dey hed

NOTE : The verb *ta hae* has another form in the Infinitive—*a*. (For examples in *a* see Para. 27d)

## CONJUGATION OF OTHER AUXILIARY VERBS :—

Present : sall	will	may	dö	can
Past : sood	wid	micht	did	could

27a. NEGATIVE FORMS. These auxiliaries, and all other monosyllabic verbs, may be made negative by adding *-na*. e.g., *canna*, *soodna*, *widna*, *medna*, *tellna*, *tochtna*, *saidna*.

(The negative may also be formed by adding the word *no* to any verb). e.g.,

“Du widna brak dee tae ida sten at lies no i dee wye.”

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

27b. INTERROGATIVE FORMS. The interrogative is formed by suffixing *-n* or *-na*. e.g., *isn/isna*, *did'n/didna*. Either form may be used.

“Is'n shö a boany ting?” (c)

“Couldna du a wun ower?” (c)

“Can'n we no aa come in?” (c)

NOTE : General interrogation is conveyed by the inversion of subject and predicate, as well as by the use of auxiliary verbs.

“Saw ye onything dere o my bonny young lad  
At wis taen ida first o da Voar?”

ECHOES FROM KLINGRAHOOL.

“What tinks du?” (c)



27c. SPECIAL USE OF THE AUXILIARY. The verb *ta be* may be used as an auxiliary with any verb in the indicative mood to express the Perfect or Pluperfect tense.

"A'm hed as gud kael i' mi kog."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"Fifty Voars I'm dell'd an set da taaties."

"Whin shö her boanie shain wis med,  
Shö flang da blossoms ower mi head,  
An laachin sed, 'I'm gotten dee'."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Ye never did me ony ill an' noo ye're düne me muckle guid."

"I'm read my Bible, bit aftener da Testament."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

"I wis taen da grice oot apon da green yonder . . ."

LOWRIE.

"Da lasses wis gotten on da anker kettle."  
"Dat twartbaak wis gien snap ower da middle."  
"Yon'll juist be laid Willa by."

LOWRIE.

"But du's taen a' dy cares ta Christ,  
An I'm taen mine ta dee."

BROKEN LIGHTS.

"Whin A'm feenished yun A'll be dön a göd day's wark." (c)

27d. The verb *ta hae*, in the form *a*, is used as an auxiliary with *böst*, *could*, *hed*, *nicht*, *most*, *sood*, and *wid*.

"I wid a laek'd till a bune a moose i' da waa. . ."  
"We nicht a come ta some bargin aboot dem . . ."  
"... doo soodna a buddered."

LOWRIE.

"I nicht a been misackered for a' my days."  
"If it hed a been me, I wid a geen an met her . . ."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

"... du wid a gien a guid piece o gaitt afore du wid a  
fun twa better flyters."

28. THE VERB : PRESENT INDICATIVE : Verbs in the  
present indicative have the termination -s :

a) in the historic present :

"So I grips an kerries her (hen) ta da hoose ..."

LOWRIE.

b) in the plural when the subject is a noun :

"Aald folk is twice bairns."

"Aald smugglers maks gud Customhus Officers."

"Far fled fuls hes fair fedders."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"Some dugs' tails is aisy wagget."

"Aa waary-codlins is no red alaek."

SMAA MURR.

"Noo aa da bairns its gyaan ta wirk apo da laand gits  
tree days agricultural eddicashion i' da week ..."

LOWRIE.

"... whin da horses an' kye an da habbleshue o' outdoor  
wark taks a' his time; ..."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

SPECIAL CASE IN PAST TENSE OF VERB *ta be* :

"... his feet wiz wirt twa pairs o haands til him."

UNST LETTER, 1836.

c) after a relative pronoun :

"Dey lang at lippens."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

d) when the subject is a pronoun separated by a  
clause or phrase from the verb :

"Dem at sjüir binds sjüir finds."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"I'm a puir sinful craetur, an' kens little o' da wisdom  
o' dis wirld; ..."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

e) after the singular pronouns *du*, *he*, *shö*, or *hit* :

"He heaps aa da kols upon hisn ain bannik."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.



When other pronouns immediately precede the verb, the verb does not end in -s.

"Hit'll be dark afore we feenish dis." (c)

"Dey aet a hantel at grinds oot."

"Dey'r aa gluttons at little güd gits."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

When these other pronouns are separated from the verb by an adverb the verb does not end in -s.

"We shörly ir near da end o da rodd noo." (c)

29. IMPERSONAL USAGE. *Der* is used for English 'there is' and 'there are.'

"Der still a man abüne a man."

"Whan de'r ower mony irons ida fire some a dem comes ill ut."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"Der nae tyool made at can deer apo stoopidity."

"Der werr denners apo da aert dan saat herrin an taaties."

SMAA MURR.

*Dey wir* is used for 'there was' and 'there were'.

"Dey wir bune a braw coarn o' sook dat day."

LOWRIE.

"Dey wir plenty o flooers ida parks ootby."

ECHOES FROM KLINGRAHOOL.

This usage is extended to other tenses :

"Du needna geng : dey'll be naebody ida hoose." (c)

"Dey widna a bön muckle left whin du cam." (c)

NOTE : *Dere's* is used demonstratively :

"Dere's da twa folk at we saa da streen." (c)

*He* is used impersonally in references to weather :

"He's a cowl'd day." (c)

"He's bön him a simmer." (c)

"He's makkin nae sook." (c)

30. REFLEXIVE USAGE. A great many verbs are used reflexively, many of them being used instead of the English intransitive.

"As a man maks up his bed sae lays he him doon."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"... we set wis ti da fire."

"Ye manna linn you on da gunnal o' a new-terred boat." LOWRIE.  
SMAA MURR.

"Du'll no set dee at." (c)

"Dip dee." (c)

"Haste dee." (c)

"We'll hae ta rest wis a peerie start." (c)

"Lay dee doon, dug!" (c)

The Ethic Dative is used :

"Auld Maunsie biggit him a crü  
 Ta growe him kail for mutton brü."

MAUNSIE'S CRU.

"Du's been dee a dim." (c)

"He's made him a time." (c)

NOTE : Other examples of idiomatic usage differing from English :

"Geng dee wis in trow." (c)

"Come you wir ben." (c)

"Rise dee wis up, du lazy sloo..."

ECHOES FROM KLINGRAHOOL.

"He'll be him a banks-gaet." (c)

## THE ADVERB

31. ADVERBS OF MANNER. Adverbs of Manner are usually the same as the corresponding adjective.

"Hit wis near dön." (c)

"He wis gyaan aafil slow." (c)

"Yun's aisy gotten." (c)

"... da tow began ta snore heavy upo' da cabe."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

32. ADVERBS OF TIME. Adverbs of Time include *aft, afore, aye, dan, eence, eenoo, evenoo.*

"Keep up dy hert an dunna greet  
 As aft doo's dune afore."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.



"Even noo he's creepin troo da yard . . ."

"Dan I hears on da brig-staens da muvvin o cüts. . ."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Da freendship o a flee is aye kindo buddersome."

"Parliament wis eence spaek yir mind ; noo it's spaek."

SMAA MURR.

33. ADVERBS OF PLACE. *abön, dere, fram, furt, here, heru, inby, ubdee, yundru.*

"Says I, 'Lass come furt, hit's bedtime wi' dem'."

LOWRIE.

"Dan I draas him wi force übdee by ta da door. . ."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Inby ida muckle shair."

TRADITIONAL SONG.

"Sees du da mön yundru abön da Wart." (c)

"He's fine abön wi dis frosty wadder." (c)

"He wis gyaan here an dere laek a moniment." (c)

"Da boats göd fram." (c)

"Dey aa göd furt." (c)

34. ADVERBS OF DEGREE. *braaly, clean, dat, kinda, maistlins, odious, ower.*

"An dads tü da door, maistlins layin in coom  
Da pairt o his end 'at wis still ida room."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"An wi' dis, heth, he slips it, an looks kinda tirn."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Whin he heard dis he nearly göd clean mad." (c)

"Dey wir braaly tired afore dey wan hame." (c)

"I never kent he wis dat weel aff." (c)

"Shö wis a odious fine body." (c)

"Shö's ower göd for him." (c)

35. INTERROGATIVE ADVERBS. *foo, hoo, whan, whaar, what for.*

"Foo is aa your folk?" (c)

"Labour kens what shö wants, bit no hoo ta get it."

SMAA MURR.



"Whaar cam yun fae?" (c)  
 "Whan's du gyaan ta mairry her?"

TRADITIONAL SONG.

"What for is Peerie Aandrew gaain liftin his feet laek  
 a shackled cock?"

SHETLAND SKETCHES AND POEMS.

36. COMPOUND ADVERBS. *headicraa, singaets,  
 stridi-legs, widdergaets.*

37. ADVERBIAL PHRASES :

TIME : *at da aige o a time, at da lang an da lent, for  
 aftest, in times, in end, up da latest.*

MANNER : *atween da bed an da fire, noo an sae, sheek for  
 showe, sidi for sidi.*

PLACE : *furt trow, hame eftir, nort ower, ubdee by.*

REASON : *eence a errand.*

CONCESSION : *for aa dat, still an on.*

## CONJUNCTIONS

38.

afore	eftir	sin
an	fil	whaar
as	fir	whaarby
at	foo	whaarsay
bit	nedder	whedder
caas	or	whin
edder	sae	

*afore—*

"Du'll just hae ta tak a air o' bland an' meal afore du  
 gengs ida ebb."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

*an—*

"Wi dis he gae a muckle gaff,  
 An made a yok for Baabie."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Da langer we live an da maer fairlies we see."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.



"So I sings oot, 'Come in, an your clivviks be clean'."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

as—

"Better late as never."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

at—

"He wis dat tirn at he widna come ithin da door." (c)

bit—

"Dey can live wantin aa der kin, bit by der neebor dey kanna win."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

caas—

"Caase da richt whaare'er ye finn it  
Aye is raeffled wi da wrang."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

edder—

"Shu left her fine English an' spak just plain as idder  
you or me."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

eftir—

"... eftir we wir gotten wir brakfist a Tiesday, we took  
wir fit i' wir haand an' set aff."

LOWRIE.

(Sometimes in form *after as*)

fae—

"Fae he cam in, da sheeks o'im is never aised." (c)

fil—

"... I wantid Willa ta wait fill du cam' back."

fir (until)—

"Shö'll jöst hae ta staand fir I win til her." (c)

fir (because)—

"Yea, I ken he's shöre ta com,  
Fir he laeks bairns braaly."

HENTILAGETS.

nedder—

"... left here I may say, an nidder can win or want."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

*or—*

"A'm hed dis caald fir mair or a week." (c)

*sae—*

"Sae he springs till his feet, and makin a claw  
For me gansey, he cloors baid da shooders awa."  
RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

*sin—*

"Hit's twenty year dis verra day  
Sin I last sang a New Year rime,"

ECHOES FROM KLINGRAHOOL.

*whaar—*

"If dis wis düne ye wid shüne see a mony a burnin' an'  
a shinin' licht whaar noo we haena da blink o a  
üllie collie."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

*whaarby—*

"Heth, som' o' dem is flo'ered laek da manse gaerden,  
whaarby, i' da kyuntry, dir nae need o' pittin ony-  
thing mair i' da window is maybe a bottle o' readin'  
sweeties. . ."

LOWRIE.

*whaarsay—*

"He gengs aroond aa toffed up, whaarsay he's a man  
o means." (c)

*whedder—*

"A'm no carin whedder he comes or no." (c)

*whin—*

"Wha faerliss hears Death's clock laek music shime,  
Whin Dayset hoids da lang hillside o Time."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

## INTERJECTIONS

39. The interjections include:
- |                |                   |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Haddee tongue! | — "Surely not!"   |
| Hae!           | — "Here you are!" |
| Hoy!           | — "Hey!", "Ahoy!" |
| Less a less!   | — "Alas!"         |
| Less an döl!   | — "do."           |



Nyim, Nyim!	—	"That tastes good!"
Wheesht!	—	"Quiet!"
What du laeks!	—	"Please yourself!"
As for dat!	—	"That's just what I would expect."
Dat in traath!	—	Expression of surprise.
Gadge!	—	"", ,, distaste.
Gori!	—	"", ,, surprise.
Hit, hit!	—	"", ,, disparagement.
Ill helt!	—	"", ,, annoyance.
Never spaek!	—	"", ,, affirmative.
So!	—	"", ,, sufficiency or resignation.
So so!	—	"", ,, conciliation.
True tale!	—	"", ,, ironic agreement.
Tweetishee	—	"", ,, utter contempt.
I! I!	—	Disclaimer, e.g., Is du gyaan ta da concert?" "I, I!"

#### 40. CALLS TO ANIMALS.

*kid, kid/kiddie, kiddie*—to sheep; *kit, kit*—to hens; *kuss, kuss*—to cows; *shuggie, shuggie*—to horses. *Kist!*—"Go away!" (to a cat); *Sigg him!*—"Seize him!" (to a dog).

NOTE: AFFIRMATIVE AND NEGATIVE. Affirmatives are: *Ya, Yea, Yiss* (with a tendency to be iterative). Negatives are:— *Na, No*.

### PREPOSITIONS

41. The chief prepositions are:—

a	— of	apon	— upon
aboot	— about	aside	— beside
abön	— above	at	— at
afore	— before	athin	— within
ahint	— behind	athoot	— without
alang	— along	atween	— between
alangst	— along	be	— by
aless	— unless	be-oot	— beyond
anaeth	— beneath	by	— by
anunder	— below	benon	— besides
apo	— upon	benort	— north by
		doon	— down

ere	— before
fae	— from
fir	— for
firnenst	— against
i'	— in
i'	— on
in	— in
in	— as
ita	— into
itil	— into

laek	— like
neist	— next
o	— of
ower	— over
roond	— round
sin	— since
ta	— to
til	— to
trou	— through
up	— up
wi	— with

*a* — form of 'of' (See *o*)

"Da sicht a dee is göd for sair een." (c)

"Du cam a da kind." (c)

"Tammie a Vodisgyill." (c)

*about* —

"Hit wis about twal a'clock whin we wan dere." (c)

"Shö wis wint ta come ower about da nicht." (c)

"... he sees da hale scroo a' tirded an torn about da eart."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

"Hit's jöst wadder for gyaan about da doors." (c)

"We gadder'd ower in Paetie's hoose  
Da streen about da hümin."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

*abön* —

"An in a meenit, straicht abön da Wart  
A mirrlin' coorteen rekks across da lift."

HENTILAGETS.

"He coodna spaek abön his braeth." (c)

*afore* —

"Lord open your wye afore you, an' bring you safely ta  
your ain hame."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

"Hit's no afore da time." (Idiomatic saying.)

"Dey göd afore da hill." (c)

"He wis takkin everything afore him." (c)



*ahint* —

"... he aye laeves his brukk ahint him for me ta redd up."

LOWRIE.

"... an fan aald Lowrie heftin spades  
Ahint da barn door."

MAREEL.

*alang* —

"E winter day I waandered oot,  
An doon alang da burn."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"I göd alang da banks." (c)

*alangst* —

"An Paetie sat itill his shair  
'At stüde alangst da gaevil,"

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

*aless* —

"... ta see Kirsie's face, aless a hairst mune."

LOWRIE.

"Dey wir naebody dere aless him." (c)

*anaeth* —

"Ita da yard da shaefs we bigg  
Anaeth da hairst müne."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

*anunder* —

"Der ne girse grows anunder a flittin sten."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"I tink da skuppers anunder da guite o da door wis  
shockit ..."

LOWRIE.

"He wis gyaan laek a mare anunder bends." (c)

*apo* — (before consonant)

*apon* — (before vowel and finally). These almost entirely replace the English preposition 'on'.

*apo* —

"Pit mair claes apo dee." (c)

"He wis apo twa minds." (c)



"Der a evil cowld apo me." (c)

"Du'll mind apo dat." (c)

"I met him apo da rodd." (c)

"He wis readin apo da paper." (c)

"Da hoose wis biggit apo da banks-broo." (c)

"Dey göd apo da wind." (c)

"Du'll tak yun medicine apo dy fastin hert." (c)

"Da maas ipo da water."

RASMIE'S BUNNIE.

"Hit's ill hained at's hained upo da güidwife."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"He sees a bonnie silkey skin lyin ipo da tap o' a stane."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

"Here we cam apo da Ostrich"

LOWRIE.

"I lint me apo da yaard-dek."

UNST LETTER, 1836.

*apon* —

"Oot ower apon a weel-kent hill."

BROKEN LIGHTS.

"A coarn a mell apon a plate."

TRADITIONAL SONG.

"Dey lowsed apon 'im." (c)

"Der a tryin knapp apon 'im." (c)

"He wis gyaan apon his fowers." (c)

"He cam apon anidder errand." (c)

"Whit lay wis he apon?" (c)

*aside* —

"Set dee doon aside her." (c)

"I wis bön ower aside Lowrie ida Gerts." (c)

*at* —

"He spak o' herrin signs, da twa,  
At tells ye sood be at her."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

*athin* — "Der a lok a men at da whalin da year." (c)

"... blaaïn da soet an' ess athin her face."

LOWRIE.



"A'm never bön athin da hoose da day." (c)

*athoot* —

"A'm never bön athoot da door da day." (c)

"Is du come athoot dee pail?" (c)

*atween* —

"An ean wid staand ipo da plank,  
Atween da twa at sat . . ."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"He wis jöst atween da bed an da fire." (c)

*be* —

"... be dat time dey'll maybe hae a paatent plottin'  
macheen . . ."

LOWRIE.

"I kent be da wye at he spak at he wisna weel plaesed." (c)

*benon* —

"Ir ye no gyaan ta tak onything benon dis?" (c)  
"Da pör gets bread; da rich bread an butter, an shugger  
benon."

SMAA MURR.

*be-oot* —

"... da muckle skerry be-oot da taing."

ECHOES FROM KLINGRAHOOL.

*benort* —

"Benort da Daeks a Voe." (Traditional Tune.)

"Da coo wis teddered oot benort da hoose." (c)

*doon* —

"As I wis gjaain doon Harbour Street  
I Föürsday efternün."

ECHOES FROM KLINGRAHOOL.

"Doon da Routh." (Traditional Tune.)

*ere* —

"Du'll git war bods er Beltin day."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

*fae* —

"... fae da dim rives till black dayset shu's yaag, yaag,  
yaagin'."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.



"Rarest o neebors, du's a sad miss fae Scranna."  
HENTILAGETS.

*fir* —

"... we coodna see a stime fur ess."

LOWRIE.

"He gae a yalk an med fur da door."

LOWRIE.

*firnenst* —

"Strong an ticht we bigg wir hooses,  
Taek dem weel fornenst da blast."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Sae veeve laek fornenst da mirk sky."

HENTILAGETS.

*i'*

"Troo aa-thing at man is biggit  
I' da glory o his strent."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"De'r no mukkel room i da kirk whan da minister kannna  
win in."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

*i* — (on)

"I wis dere i' Försday." (c)

*in* —

(Before vowels and when there is no article.)  
"... dan hit maitters no whidder doo smoars him in a  
tub, or taks his head aff wi' a saa."

LOWRIE.

"An red wi rage he bet in twa  
Da heogue atween his yackels."

NICKY TWATT AN KEETY CLAW.

"Hit wis jöst in times at we could skrime da laand."

(c)

"I got yun graavet in a present." (c)

*ita* —

"Whit's no ita da hoose, an no oot ida hoose, and yit hit's  
about da hoose?" (Old Riddle.)

"Geng ita your beef-barrel." (Traditional Song)



*itil* — "I asked her fir a bag ta kerry da hen itil."  
LOWRIE.

"It's lyin dere itil a bing."  
HENTILAGETS.

*laek* — "He wis gyaan laek da sun apo da waa." (c)  
"Hit's laek a day at du wid geng ta da handline." (c)  
"An wi saft slumber for a paet  
Shü rests dem laek da fire."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Aff he guid laek da fool oda air."  
UNST LETTER, 1836.

*neist* — "Gies da bit lies neist da breest."  
TRADITIONAL SONG.

*o'* — (Emphatic form of English 'of')  
"A'm sent dee da leatter at I wiz teallin dee o'."  
UNST LETTER, 1836.

"What tink you o' 'im?" (c)  
(cf. "What tink you a him?")

NOTE: *o* is sometimes used partitively, e.g.,  
"Dey wir o dem at didna believe him." (c)

*on* — (See *apo*) Used adverbially along with certain verbs.  
See para. '45.  
"Dey fell oot at da crö, an nearly hed da nevs on." (c)

*ower* — "Tak da Scord o Quarff ower da Point o Skeld."  
LOCAL MEED.

"A'm gyaan dere ower da helli." (c)

*roond* — "He kent no 'at wir bit o glob  
Gengs tirlin roond da sun."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Is du comin for a turn roond da rods?" (c)



*sin* —

"I hed a draem no lang sin syne . . ."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

*ta* —

"I'm gaen ta da far haaf . . ."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

"Sae rins da reel ta some mysteerious tune."

HENTILAGETS.

*til* —

"I says til him, "Bridder, kens doo dis snuff-mill?"

UNST LETTER, 1836.

"... here's Gibbie, wi Kirsie hingin in till him."

LOWRIE.

"Da day slips aff his gowlden sark  
An smoots him till his bed."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Noo, whaar Ill-Helt's du makkin till  
Dis aerly i da moarnin?"

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

*trou* —

"Willa cam bucksin in trow da transe. . ."

LOWRIE.

"I'll tak dee roond trou Grönasound."

HENTILAGETS.

*up* —

"Dan tak ye comfirt, bridders, aye,  
As up Life's brae ye stunk."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Will ye fin yer wye up da stairs?" (c)

*wi* —

"Ye kanna fell a dog wi a ben."

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.

"... da grice cam doon wi a boof. . ."

LOWRIE.

"What ee saa du dat wi?"

ANGUS'S GLOSSARY.



"Geng furt wi dee!" (c)

"Da bairn wis bön kloored wi a cat." (c)

42. MULTIPLE FORMS. In some cases pairs of prepositions and adverbs have combined, frequently giving an iterative effect:— *aff a, doon a, doon ita, in a, in ita, oot a, oot ita, up a, up ita.*

"Shö klined a sheave a loff wi butter new aff a da kirn." (c)

"He wis gyaan aff a fit, an on a fit." (c)

"He climmed doon ita da gyo eftir wrack-wid." (c)

"Set dee in ita da restin-shair." (c)

"He kent anyoch ta keep him oot a da fire an aff a da water." (c)

"Bide in a da hoose; dunna geng oot ita da snaa." (c)

"Du's up a dee cuddie da nicht." (c)

### OTHER VERBAL USAGE

43. THE GERUND. Certain idioms with the gerund may be noted.

"Da coo wis in liftin." (c)

"Dey wir at hair-rivin." (c)

"Dis paets is fir raisin." (c)

"He wis nedder fir haddin or bindin." (c)

In some districts the gerund is pronounced differently from the present participle.

44. SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD. The forms of verbs in the subjunctive mood are the same as those in the indicative, except that the verb *be* has a special subjunctive form.

"If dat be's true, du'll hae ta geng." (c)

"I widna wiss him ony ill, bröt although he be's." (c)

45. There are many examples, mainly in idiomatic phrases, of adverbs, and prepositions, being used in conjunction with verbs and thus providing several distinctions of verbal meaning. (For specialised meanings see under verb in Glossary.)

*ta aet* —

"Folk, you'll aet up, or you'll miss da tide." (c)



*ta blatter* —  
 "I'm a püir deein' objekd wi da life just blatterin' in."  
 SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

*ta brak* —  
 "I wis tinkin ta brak oot a bit a hill laand ida Voar." (c)  
 "Is yun taaties no brokken up ta boil yit?" (c)  
 "Dey wir five a dem dellin an brakkin on ida rig." (c)  
 "Is du said onything aboot it yit?" "Na, A'm no brokken  
 it up til him yit." (c)

*ta come* —  
 "Laeve him fir a bit an he'll shön come at." (c)  
 "Du's no ta come at me wi yun haet kettle." (c)  
 "He wis braaly tirn, but shö shön cam aboot him." (c)  
 "I cam apo Jeemie Tamson apo da Ayre o Widwick."  
 UNST LETTER, 1836.

*ta draa* —  
 "Whin da raingeese gengs ta da hill  
 Draa up your boats an geng whaar you will."  
 OLD SAYING.  
 "He wiz draain him weel up ta Johnsmas."

UNST LETTER, 1836  
 "Draa on dee socks an come wi me." (c)

*ta cast* —  
 "Du'll mind an cast aff a loop at da end a da geng." (c)  
 "Shö's no bön da sam sin her man wis cassen awa at da  
 haaf-fishin." (c)  
 "Whin dey loused ta da flytin shö wis wint ta cast up  
 aald history til him." (c)  
 "Cast aff dee jacket." (c)  
 "I widna cast oot wi a bit a reestit mutton." (c)  
 "Hit's time at du cöst yun aald breeks by." (c)  
 "A boat wi' dis kind o' knotts in her wis shüre ta be  
 cassen awa."

*ta faa* —  
 SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.  
 "Hit faas afore me at we never paid for yun mell." (c)  
 "Da flesh is kinda faan apon wi da haet wadder." (c)  
 "He's faan awa ida wind." (c)



"Noo faa du ower, my lammie." (Traditional lullaby.)  
 "I will hae ta be movin' noo, it's gaain ipun ten o'clock."  
 SHETLAND SKETCHES AND POEMS.

*ta geng* —

"Da wind is gien aboot noo ida efternön." (c)  
 "Da book is gien fae da brods." (c)  
 "I mindit hit eence, bit hit's aa gien fae me noo." (c)  
 "Yon gansey is fairly gien in sin he wis wishen." (c)  
 "Der gien at yon dancin' aa winter." (c)

*ta hadd* —

"If du hadds nort ower du'll be sure ta come apon him." (c)  
 "Your comin ower closs; hadd aff o me." (c)  
 "Hadd on a meenit an A'll be wi dee." (c)  
 "Tinks doo will dis wadder hadd up lang?" (c)  
 "Hadd awa oot ower, dog!" (c)  
 "If du hadds at him du'll sön mester him." (c)  
 "If du hadds in ta da banks du'll aisy fin da noust." (c)

*ta hear* —

"Dat's suntin ta hear apun." (c)

*ta lay* —

"Jöst du lay dee mind till it an du'll no be lang." (c)  
 "Aald Naanie wis da very een ta lay a aamos apon." (c)  
 "He laid aff for a solid oor." (c)  
 "He's layin at da rain." (c)  
 "He's laid doon a lok a snaa." (c)  
 "So boys, lay in your aers." (c)  
 "Whin nicht cam da snaa fairly laid on."  
 "Shö'll lay up twartree spencers ida coorse o a week." (c)  
 "Lay tö da door boy." (c)  
 "Lay up dee twartree pennies." (c)  
 "Shö wis sittin dere layin at da sock." (c)  
 "He wis ony wun half-rod whin he hed ta lay aboot wi  
 da bad nicht." (c)  
 "Hurry up, boy, an lay yon gruel athin dee." (c)  
 "What dat wife lays oot for da ting a boy!" (c)  
 "Da lichtning strak da hoose an laid everything  
 in bruck." (c)



"He wis laid up every winter wi da rheumatics." (c)

"A'll jöst lay me ower ida restin-shair." (c)

"Lay fae dee!" (c)

*ta licht* —

"Whinever he göd furt da trows wid licht till 'im." (c)

"Whaar lichtit du in wi yon?" (c)

*ta lowse* —

"He lowsed wi da rain." (c)

"Lowse du up yon parcel, till I see what's athin him." (c)

"If he dösna lat wis alane we'll aa lowse apon 'im." (c)

"Lowse fae dee!" (c)

*ta mak* —

"Da sea wis makkin apo da baa." (c)

"He wis wint ta hae his tae, an dan mak for da banks." (c)

"Dey wir faird at he wid mak awa wi himsel." (c)

"Shö wis sittin makkin apon her sock." (c)

"If du maks efter him noo du'll aisy catch him." (c)

"Hit's makkin up for a bad nicht." (c)

"My green an' magenta gravit wi da yellow tossils at  
Kirsie wis just med aff..."

LOWRIE.

*ta redd* —

"Ta redd oot kin ye mann be wice;

It taks a pooer o hunsin."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

"Shö wis trang reddin up da hoose." (c)

*ta set* —

"Set dee in ta da fire." (c)

"Hoo mony lambs is du gyaan ta set on da year?" (c)

"Eftir as he wis taen his denner he set him at." (c)

"Heth! Yun'll no set dee up." (c)

"He's settin up a shooer ida Nor-wast." (c)

"Set up da fire—he's turnin aafil caald." (c)

"Wid du manage ta set me ower da soond?" (c)

"Der shörly someen set him up ta yon prettikin." (c)

"Da dog set up a aafil yalkin." (c)

"Set dee doon apo dis shair." (c)



"Fifty simmers ower da Muckle Water  
I'm sailed an rouwed an striven an set on."

RASMIE'S BUDDIE.

*ta sit* —

"A'm no gyaan ta sit oot da fire." (c)

"So, sit up itil him an his onkerry." (c)

"Dey wir wint ta sit aboot da fire makkin." (c)

"Deil sit anunder dee!" (c)

"Deil sit athin dee!" (c)

"Deil sit i der finger-ends!" (c)

"Dey sat fornenst een anidder aa nicht." (c)

"... we wir blyde ta sit in an rest wis."

LOWRIE.

*ta staand* —

"Ever sin dat nicht he staands afore me yit." (c)

"Da wind is staandin on." (c)

"You'll git cowld yunder, staandin aboot." (c)

"Da rain wis staandin aff a da aert." (c)

*ta stick* —

"Whin we wan ta da beach I stack da boat at." (c)

"Stick up yon calendar apo da waa." (c)

*ta tak* —

"Shö wis aafil taen aff." (c)

"Da rain never seemed laek ta tak aff." (c)

"Da skroo wis weel taen aboot." (c)

"Tak at dee, boy, an we'll shön win hame." (c)

"Ill Helt care, du can tak on." (c)

"Whin his wife deed, what he took on!" (c)

"For aa at I gae him a broad hint, he never took me on." (c)

"Du'll hae ta tak in yon baand; he's ower lang." (c)

"He took on his kishie a paets an made for da hoose." (c)

"He never took up itil it." (c)

"Dey wir taen him up wrang." (c)

"He's takkin up ita da wind." (c)

"He wis taen till fae Barnisdale an doon." (c)

"He took for da hoose." (c)

"Da fok took aafil weel wi da new minister." (c)



"He took till his een." (c)

"Shö took up da bairns whin da midder deed." (c)

"He wis blyde ta tak da door ower his head as fast as he cud."

SHETLAND FIRESIDE TALES.

*ta tear* —

"Dey wir aa tearin at an wirkin." (c)

"He'll tear him up a time." (c)

*ta wirk* —

"He wroucht oot every nip a laand fae da banks-broo ta da hill-daek." (c)

"He wroucht on till he wis about maachtless." (c)

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IRREGULAR VERBS

aa	aaned	aaned
	acht	acht
aet	öt	ötten
		aeten
bake	bakit	bakit
	byook	byookin
		baken
bear	bör	borne
begin	begood	begood
	begöd	begöd
bid	bade	bidden
bide	bed	bidden
bind	band	bund
bite	bet	bitten
blaa	blew	blaan
brak	brook	brokken
bring	broucht	broucht
burn	brunt	brunt
burst	burstit	bursen
buy	boucht	boucht
cast	cöst	cassen
cleave	cleaved	cloven
	cloved	
clim	clam	clum
	climmed	climmed



come	cam	come
craa	craad	craad
	crew	craan
creep	creepit	creepit
	crepp	
ding	dang	dung
draa	drew	draan
drive	drave	driven
drink	drank	drukken
dö	did	dön
faa	fell	faan
fetch	fetched	fetched
	fötch	
fin	fan	fun
flaa	flaad	flaan
flae	flaed	flen
flyte	flet	flitten
freeze	freezed	frozen
gaa-burst	gaa-bursti:	gaa-bursen
geng	göd	gien
get	got	gotten
gie	gied	gien
	gae	
greet	gret	grutten
grind	grand	grund
growe	grew	growen
hadd	held	hadden
	höld	
haet	haetit	haetit
	het	
hing	hang	hung
	hung	
hit	hat	hitten
hochbend	hochbendit	hochbendit
	hochbund	hochbund
jimp	iamp	juppm
	jimpit	jimpit
laach	laacht	laacht
	lyooch	laachen



lat	löt	latten
lay	laid	laid
lie	lay	lien
loop	lep	luppen
maa	maad	maan
misfare	misför	misforne
	misföred	misföred
misgeng	misgöd	misgien
mistak	mistook	mistaen
owercome	owercam	owercome
owerdraa	owerdrew	owerdraan
owergeng	owergöd	owergien
owertak	owertook	owertaen
ride	red	ridden
rin	ran	run
rise	rasc	risen
rive	rave	riven
rost	rostit	rossen
rot	rostit	rostit
saa	saad	saan
seek	sought	sought
sell	sowld	sowld
	selled	selled
shaa	shew	shaan
shaste	shastit	shastit
	shöst	
shaer	shör	shorn
shave	shöve	shoven
	shaved	shaved
sheen	shon	shon
	sheened	sheened
showe	showed	shown
sit	sat	sitten
slide	sled	slidden
sling	slang	slung
snaa	snaad	snaan
spaek	spak	spokken
spin	span	spun
staand	stöd	stöd



stael	stöl	stowen
stick	stack	stucken
strick	strack	strucken
sling	slang	slung
stride	stred	stridden
strive	strave	striven
swear	swör	sworn
sweat	swett	swett
		sweated
sweem	swam	swöm
tak	took	taen
		tön
tell	taald	taald
	towld	towld
	telt	telt
	telled	telled
tear	tör	torn
tink	tocht	tocht
traa	traad	traan
	trew	
trive	trave	trivven
up-tak	up-took	up-taen
wash	wösh	wöshen
wish	wösh/wished	wishen
white	whet	whet
wear	wör	worn
weet	wet	wet
	weetit	weetit
win	wan	wun
wind	wand	wund
wirk	wroucht	wroucht
	wirkit	
write	wret	wret
	wrat	
	wret	written

SURVIVING IN PARTICIPIAL FORM ONLY :

behadden  
begrutten



blödsprung  
 gurblottit  
 inbiggit  
 kroppm  
 wanrestit

# VERBS OF UNUSUAL CONJUGATION :

affbend	affbent	affbent
catch	catched	catched
cled	cled	cled
crugset	crugset	crugset
cut	cuttit	cuttit
firyat	firyat	firyat
hurt	hurtit	hurtit
keep	keepit	keepit
ken	kent	kent
kyin	kyent	kyent
ledd	ledd	ledd
swall	swalled	swalled
swöm	swöm'd	swöm'd



## GLOSSARY OF WORDS AND PHRASES

<i>aa</i>	— to owe.
<i>aamos</i>	— a promised gift to someone on condition that a wish is granted to the donor.
<i>aige o a time</i>	— occasionally.
<i>aer</i>	— oar.
<i>aeshin-head</i>	— top of side wall of house inside roof.
<i>aff-biddin</i>	— forbidding.
<i>amp</i>	— state of anxious expectancy.
<i>antrin</i>	— occasional.
<i>ase</i>	— ashes.
<i>atween da bed an</i>	— in a semi-invalid condition.
<i>da fire</i>	— blazing fire.
<i>aze</i>	— cliffs.
<i>banks</i>	— festering.
<i>bellin</i>	— harness for peat-pony.
<i>bends</i>	— hairy.
<i>birsie</i>	— whey.
<i>blaand</i>	— flickering (as applied to breath).
<i>blattersin</i>	— in an agitated condition.
<i>blödsprung</i>	— gladness.
<i>blydeness</i>	— offers.
<i>bods</i>	— considerably.
<i>braaly</i>	— ta brak on : to break up sod in delving.
<i>brak</i>	ta brak oot : to cultivate. ta brak up : 1) to begin; 2) to mention.
<i>brods</i>	— boards.
<i>bucksin</i>	— walking heavily.
<i>cabe</i>	— thole.
<i>cam o da kind</i>	— was of that sort.
<i>cast</i>	— ta cast aff : to take off. cassen awa : lost (generally at sea). ta cast oot : quarrel.



*coarn*  
*collie*  
*come*

*cöts*  
*dadderi*  
*dayset*  
*denkies*  
*döless*  
*draa*

*eence a errand*  
*eenoo*  
*ere da streen*  
*faa*

*fairlies*  
*fastin hert*  
*fell*  
*fil ska*  
*flittin sten*

*for aa dat*  
*fram*  
*furt*  
*gaa-burst*  
*gaff*  
*gansey*  
*geng*

- ta cast up : ta taunt by raking up the past.
- small quantity.
- primitive open lamp.
- ta come at: 1) to come to one-self; 2) to touch.
- ta come aboot : to pacify.
- ankles.
- drudgery.
- evening.
- hollows.
- indolent.
- ta draa on : to pull on.
- ta draa up : to approach (of time) for that purpose.
- now.
- night before last.
- ta faa afore : to occur to.
- faan apön : tainted (of food).
- ta faa awa : 1) to die down; 2) to fall asleep.
- wonders.
- an empty stomach.
- to stun.
- state of levity.
- stone used for knocking in stake of animals' tethers.
- nevertheless.
- far off : generally to seaward.
- outside the house.
- to become breathless.
- a loud laugh.
- jersey.
- gien at : persisted.
- gien in : shrunk.
- göd afore da hill : went down the hill.
- göd apo da wind : went against the wind.



<i>graavet</i>	— scarf.
<i>gulsa</i>	— jaundice.
<i>gurbloittit</i>	— badly washed.
<i>guit</i>	— entry of a door.
<i>gyo</i>	— a creek with steep sides.
<i>haaf</i>	— the open sea.
<i>habbleshue</i>	— confusion.
<i>hadd</i>	— ta hadd at: to keep at. ta hadd in: to keep in. ta hadd up: remain fair (of weather).
<i>hain</i>	— to economise.
<i>hantel</i>	— a sufficient quantity.
<i>hatter</i>	— affliction.
<i>heftin</i>	— putting the iron on a spade-handle.
<i>helli</i>	— week-end.
<i>heogue</i>	— the twisted straw from which a kishie is made.
<i>heru</i>	— form of 'here'.
<i>hochbend</i>	— to compress the tendon of an animal's hind-leg so as to restrict movement.
<i>hooro</i>	— commotion.
<i>hömin</i>	— twilight.
<i>hunsin</i>	— searching.
<i>inbiggit</i>	— morose and uncommunicative.
<i>kishie</i>	— straw basket for carrying on back
<i>kirk-mark</i>	— hare-lip.
<i>lang an da lent</i>	— eventually.
<i>lay</i>	— ta lay aff: to talk volubly. ta lay at: 1) to work energetically; 2) to fall heavily (of rain). ta lay in bruck: to destroy. lay it athin dee!: eat it up quickly! ta lay oot for: to defame. laid up: incapacitated. ta lay dee mind til: to apply the mind to.



	lay fae dee! : jump into action.
	ta lay up : to begin a piece of knitting.
	ta lay tö : to close.
	to lay on : to fall heavily (of snow).
<i>lear</i>	— learning.
<i>licht</i>	— ta licht in wi : to come across.
	ta licht til : to beset.
<i>lift</i>	— the heavens.
<i>liftin</i>	— in liftin : a state of weakness in cattle, through which, being unable to stand, they are supported in a sling suspended from roof.
<i>linn</i>	— to rest.
<i>lipperin</i>	— brimful.
<i>lowse</i>	— ta lowse apon : to attack.
	lowse fae dee! : jump into action!
	ta lowse up : to unloose.
	to lowse wi rain : to begin to rain heavily.
<i>maachless</i>	— powerless.
<i>mak</i>	— made aff : completed.
	makkin apon : knitting.
	makkin apo da baa : about to break over sunken rock.
<i>meed</i>	— a landmark for ascertaining position at sea.
<i>mid-room</i>	— the middle compartment of a boat, especially the sixern.
<i>mirakilled / mis</i>	
<i>ackered</i>	— badly injured.
<i>mirrlin</i>	— vibrating.
<i>mistare</i>	— to come to grief.
<i>mooth-liftin</i>	— morsel.
<i>mutshkin</i>	— a 5 gill measure.
<i>near-begyaan</i>	— miserly.
<i>noo an sae</i>	— of an indifferent quality or state.
<i>on-kerry</i>	— carry on.



<i>oomik</i>	— a very small quantity.
<i>oorik</i>	— nonsense.
<i>peerie</i>	— small.
<i>pellit</i>	— ragged.
<i>pör-aamous</i>	— frail.
<i>prettikin</i>	— prank.
<i>purlin</i>	— poking.
<i>pyaa</i>	— sign of life.
<i>raetfled</i>	— tangled.
<i>redd</i>	— ta redd oot kin : to trace lineage. ta redd up : to tidy.
<i>reestit</i>	— salted and dried (of mutton).
<i>rekks</i>	— to reach.
<i>rive</i>	— to tear.
<i>röd</i>	— rambling talk.
<i>rukkli</i>	— rough.
<i>set</i>	— ta set on: 1) to add to flock (of animals); 2) to try hard. set him at : relaxed himself. set dee up : enhance your position. ta set up : 1) to develop (of a shower); 2) to incite; 3) to begin (of noise). ta set ower : to ferry across.
<i>setnin</i>	— a lamb retained in flock for breeding purposes.
<i>shaer</i>	— to reap.
<i>shappin-can</i>	— a quart container.
<i>sheek for showe</i>	— sitting close together in earnest conversation.
<i>sholmit</i>	— having a white face (as sheep).
<i>singaets</i>	— movement from left to right.
<i>sit</i>	— ta sit oot : to outstay. sit up atil him ! : may the Devil take him !
<i>skerry</i>	— a rock in the sea.
<i>skrime</i>	— detect by peering.
<i>skroo</i>	— corn-stack.
<i>smoar</i>	— to smother.



<i>smoot</i>	— steal away.
<i>snapped</i>	— stumbled.
<i>snuids</i>	— parts of fishing line.
<i>staand</i>	— staandin aff : rebounding. staands afore me : remains a vivid memory. staandin on : blowing directly on (of wind).
<i>steid</i>	— foundation.
<i>stick</i>	— ta stick da boat at : to beach the boat temporarily.
<i>still an on</i>	— nevertheless.
<i>stime</i>	— canna see a stime : cannot see at all.
<i>stunk</i>	— to pant.
<i>sweerta</i>	— laziness.
<i>taek</i>	— to thatch.
<i>taing</i>	— small peninsula.
<i>tak</i>	— taen aff : taken aback. taen aboot : secured. taen him up wrang : misunderstood. taen til : notorious. tak at : go ahead. tak on : suffer the consequence. took on—lamented. never took me on : paid no attention. ta tak in : to shorten. took for : headed for. took up in : increased (of wind). took up : looked after. took weel wi : were friendly with. took til his een : began to cry.
<i>teddisome</i>	— tedious.
<i>tear</i>	— ta tear at : to work hard. He'll tear him up a time : The weather will improve.
<i>tirded</i>	— unloosed.
<i>tiin</i>	— angry.



<i>transe</i>	—	passage in a house.
<i>trang</i>	—	busy.
<i>traw-pit</i>	—	zeal in working.
<i>twart-baak</i>	—	cross-baulk in roof.
<i>ubdee</i>	—	out.
<i>undömious</i>	—	tremendous.
<i>up a dee cuddie</i>	—	on your high horse
<i>up da latest</i>	—	in the long run.
<i>uploppm</i>	—	excitable in a boisterous manner.
<i>up-tak</i>	—	to make contact with.
<i>veev</i>	—	vivid.
<i>Voar</i>	—	Spring.
<i>vyndless</i>	—	clumsy.
<i>waa-geng</i>	—	smell.
<i>wan-paece</i>	—	strife.
<i>wanrestit</i>	—	bereft of sleep.
<i>watter-traa</i>	—	heartburn.
<i>whaanious</i>	—	huge.
<i>whaarsaymeko</i>	—	1) as much as to say; 2) pretence.
<i>white</i>	—	cease from action.
<i>widdergaets</i>	—	against the sun.
<i>wint</i>	—	accustomed.
<i>willisome</i>	—	difficult to follow (of a route).
<i>wirk</i>	—	wrought on : carried on.
	—	wrought oot : cultivated.
	—	back teeth.
	—	yelp.
<i>yackels</i>		
<i>yalk</i>		

## ERRATA

- p. 29, line 2 — include this example under *ta geng*.  
 p. 40 — for *maachless* read *maachtless*.







## APPENDIX

### SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE SPELLING OF THE SHETLAND DIALECT

A glance at the examples in this book from printed sources will suffice to show just how inconsistent the spelling of our dialect is. With no established convention for guidance, dialect writers have endeavoured to represent their own local pronunciations as faithfully as possible, thus providing interesting material for the compilers of a dialect atlas, but making the task of the reader more difficult. Indeed, we ourselves, in the absence of a standard spelling, have contributed to this multiplicity of spelling variants.

Spelling is at best a compromise, an endeavour amid the shifting sands of pronunciation to establish a fairly stable symbol for the word. The task of communicating the word from writer to reader is the all-important one in literature, and it is through the written form, the spelt word, that the first, vital contact is made. It is obvious that ease of communication depends on the ease with which the reader can identify the written form, and this in turn will depend on familiarity with the spelling convention used. When there is no established convention, reading becomes more laborious.

If it is agreed that the writer has an obligation to the reader to make communication as free as possible from superficial barriers, then the present state of private enterprise in spelling must place itself under some restraint. The following suggestions are not intended as the rigid rules perhaps implied by the previous statement, but as suggestions leading towards a greater, if not complete, uniformity. Consistency is not necessarily a virtue; but without it spelling becomes an end in itself rather than a means to the real end which is communication.

If the written dialect is to be easily read, then :—

- 1) An attempt should be made to base its spelling on the convention most familiar to the reader, which for most Shetlanders would be the English. An English word with a local pronunciation only slightly different



need not vary from the normal English spelling. The reader will immediately identify it, and knowing that he is reading dialect will apply his own local pronunciation. It should be unnecessary, for example, to change "calm" into *kaam* or *kaum*; "fixed" into *fikst*; or "come" into *kumm*.

2) Outlandish forms, used perhaps in a misdirected zeal to emphasise the non-English character of the dialect, should be avoided as far as possible. In this respect the habit of doubling certain letters to emphasise the heavy consonantal quality of the dialect, as in *winnd*, *kann*, *bakk*, seems unnecessary.

3) Use of the apostrophe to indicate a letter or letters omitted, should be reduced to a minimum, and confined mainly to indicate where a letter has been omitted from the normal SHETLAND usage—not the English. After all it is the Shetland speech which is being used. The present participle in Shetland ends in *-in*, which makes the final apostrophe in words such as *gyaan'*, *rinnin'*, *buksin'*, rather pointless. The Shetland conjunction being *an* not *and* should make it unnecessary to write *an'*.

When, however, the written form is a contraction of a Shetland word or words, the apostrophe is necessary, e.g., *A'm*, *gie'r*, *du's*, *whaar's*.

The following are suggestions applying to sounds which lead to the greatest spelling variants :

*ö*—*crö*, *döless*, *spör*, *tölly*, *kröl*.

*ö* is preferred to *ü*, as, etymologically speaking, the sound represented is a modified o-sound. Thus English "poor", "good", "swore", became *pör*, *göd*, *swör*.

*k*—not to replace *c* in words with English cognates, nor to be used with *s* for *xt*. Thus *mixter* is to be preferred to *mikster*.

*y*—rather than *j* when following initial consonant—as *byok*, *gyaan*, *hyook*, *nyoag*.

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